

## 6. GATEWAYS

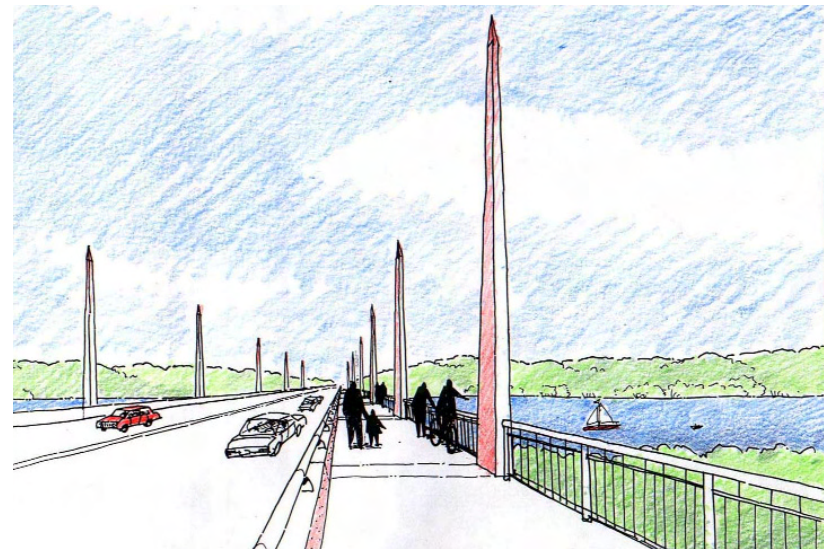
Downtown is experienced from the initial points of entry, along the major entry corridors, and into the heart of downtown. Every aspect of this arrival sequence should be addressed, with special attention given to the first impression created at the gateways. The primary gateway points into downtown are at the Route 29 Expressway exit at Main Street and at the Fifth Street intersection with Rivermont, Church Street, and Main Street. Twelfth Street is a gateway corridor and improvements to this corridor are discussed in Section 4.2. In addition, three bridges are also key elements to the arrival sequence: the John Lynch Bridge (Business Route 29), the Expressway Bridge, and the Rivermont Bridge. Of these bridges, the John Lynch Bridge is the highest priority for improvement given its current lack of character and opportunities for improvement, the vital pedestrian/bicycle link that it will provide, and the views of downtown and the riverfront that it offers. In all cases, the gateway improvements should be planned and coordinated with a comprehensive signage system, which is discussed in Section 7.

### 6.1 John Lynch Bridge

The John Lynch Bridge provides a dramatic entry into Downtown Lynchburg with views of the river and the historic buildings climbing the hill. The bridge and its roadway (Business Route 29) are designed to highway standards, however, and provide little in the way of character, aesthetics, or a sense of gateway or arrival. The bridge is also highly visible from the downtown and from the riverfront area. The wide cross section of the bridge (75 feet) encourages high-speed travel (in comparison, the Expressway Bridge is only 60 feet wide), yet this traffic needs to decelerate to match the speeds that are appropriate for an urban street such as Fifth Street.

The Master Plan recommends streetscape elements on the surface of the bridge that will dramatically improve its character and its function as a gateway with minimal capital expenditures. Four vehicular lanes of traffic with shoulders will occupy between 50 and 60 feet of the cross section width, leaving as much as 15 feet that can be defined as a pedestrian and bicycle pathway. This pathway will be separated from the travel lanes by a low, landscape barrier system and could also be raised above the roadway level by 6 to 18 inches, if feasible structurally.

This pedestrian/bicycle link will be vital in joining the north and south banks of the James River, until additional bridges are added at the level of the riverbanks. Given its visibility, the bridge should be illuminated with new lights that define the span as a landmark in the City while orienting the arriving visitor and improving safety for pedestrians. These lights should be designed as special features that reflect the historic character of

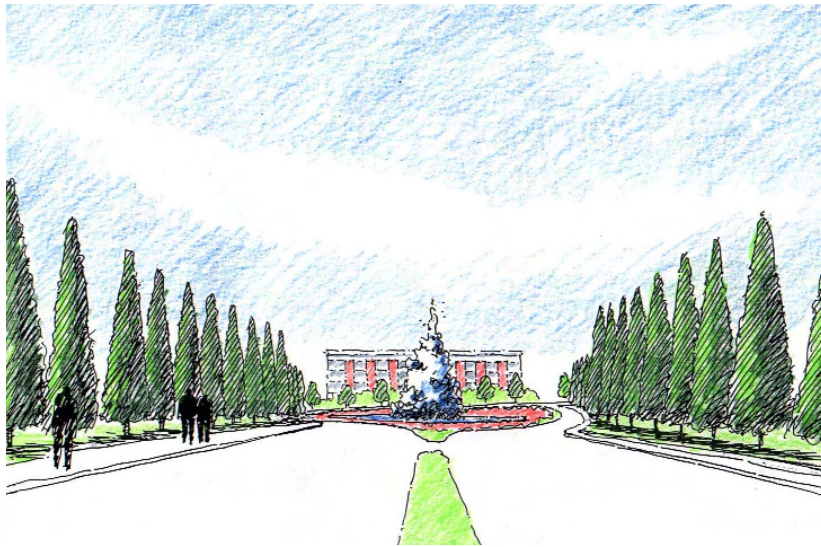


Sketch of Bridge Improvements.

the downtown. Additionally, pillars, columns, or other vertical elements could be added to mark the segments of the bridge that actually pass over water. The “concrete barrier”-style railing should be replaced with open, ornamental, wrought-iron-style fencing to afford James River views for pedestrians and car passengers alike.

### ***Implementation Steps***

- Coordinate with VDOT regarding the provision of a designated pedestrian/bicycle lane on the bridge.
- Identify potential state funds for lighting the bridge and replacing Jersey barriers with open railings.



Rivermont Avenue and Fifth Street Gateway Sketch Looking East Toward Downtown

## **6.2 Rivermont Avenue and Fifth Street Gateway**

The primary gateway on the west side of downtown is the intersection of Rivermont Avenue with Fifth Street (Business Route 29), Church Street, and Main Street. Through this gateway pass all motorists on Business Route 29 as well as those arriving from Rivermont to the west (18,000 cars per day). These travelers should have a sense of arrival appropriate for a downtown location, with landscape and streetscape improvements that complement a new signage system.

As mentioned in Section 4.2, Fifth Street should be improved with continuous street trees and more thought for pedestrians walking along the edge of the roadway or trying to cross it. These improvements will be punctuated with a new fountain within the Rivermont and Fifth Street island (“The Morrison Garden”). The fountain must be significant in size, with a vertical water element so that it will be easily visible from the roadway. With a continuation of pear trees on Fifth Street, the point of intersection and arrival at the traffic island will be highlighted with cedar trees that line the entrance roads to the Rivermont Bridge, recalling traditional landscape design elements found in the area. The Rivermont Bridge would benefit from aesthetic improvements similar to the John Lynch Bridge (i.e., pylons, historic lights and railings). A bold move to one lane in each direction would allow for slower traffic, bike paths and wide pedestrian walkways.

### ***Implementation Steps***

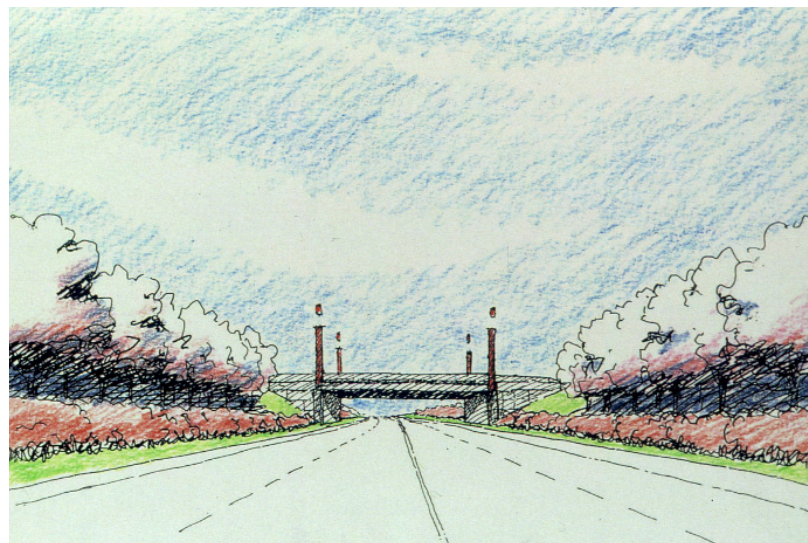
- Coordinate with VDOT regarding improvements in and around Business Route 29 and identify potential state funding.

### 6.3 Route 29 Expressway Gateway

Landscape design improvements in the area of the Route 29 Expressway exit at Main Street will signal the presence and quality of downtown, complementing the system of advance signs and downtown directional signage. Within the partial cloverleaf at the south side of Main Street, a bold planting design will bring color and beauty to this site. With minimal intervention, two masses of flowering ornamental trees will provide remarkable spring colors and a structured green landscape that signifies downtown. At the Main Street Bridge over the Expressway, vertical elements combined with bridge illumination will call attention to the sense of arrival and the location of the exits.

#### *Implementation Steps*

- Coordinate with VDOT regarding funding for highway landscape improvements.
- Identify funding for bridge elements.



Landmark planting and bridge improvements will mark the downtown exit on the Route 29 Expressway at Main Street.

